EXHIBIT A

Technology, democracy and trust Creating a more democratic online world

September 28, 2021

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jH5VXgLj05E

1   JESSICA CECIL: Thank you for tuning in, and thanks to the Paris Peace

2 Forum for the opportunity to present to such an esteemed audience. I'm

3 looking forward to answering your questions after my short presentation. I'm

4 Jessica Cecil, the BBC's Director of the Trusted News Initiative. The

5 Initiative is an industry collaboration of major news and global tech

6 organizations, working together to stop the spread of disinformation where it

7 poses the risk of real world harm. Can we have the first slide, please? This

8 time of global uncertainty and fear has provided fertile ground for falsity,

9 unproven preventions, and fake cures which sometimes prove fatal. One report

10 puts the global human cost of bad information about COVID-19 at over 800

11 deaths in just the first three months of 2020, according to the American

12 Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene. If that was just in the first three

13 months of 2020, just imagine how many it must be now. If we can do anything

14 to fight the most serious disinformation to make elections fair and save

15 lives, we should. The BBC has stepped up investment and focus in its

16 journalism around disinformation. Teams producing Reality Check, Beyond Fake

17 News, and others, are working with the insight brought by BBC monitoring to

18 expose and debunk dangerous and often malicious falsehoods, but we believed

19 there was more we could do, and do it in partnership with others. A year ago,

20 the BBC convened the world's biggest tech platforms and the most prominent

21 news organizations in an urgent challenge. At times of highest jeopardy, when

22 elections or lives are at stake, we asked, is there a way that we can alert

23 each other to the most dangerous false stories? Can we stop them spreading

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1   fast across the internet, preventing them from doing real world harm? Rather

2   than reel off a list of all the organizations involved in the Trusted News

3   Initiative, in the next three slides, we'll show you a list of our partners,

4   starting with the tech platforms. We all believed trying something was better

5   than doing nothing. There are audiences and users running into billions

6   across this partnership who are potentially touched by disinformation, and

7   this is important for the BBC. With a commitment to impartiality at the very

8   top of our priorities, we wanted to work with others around the world to try

9   and prevent some of the damage done by false news. Can we have the next

10 slide, please? And this matters to me. I have spent my entire career as a

11 journalist and media executive, inspired throughout by the promise of

12 journalism. It can show readers, audiences, users, the world around them with

13 fresh eyes, so if you can't trust what you read, what you see, what you hear,

14 you are robbed of that, and bad things can happen. The very foundations of

15 our civic life are threatened. We have been experimenting over the past year

16 with turning good intentions into actions that work. We have now found a way

17 to alert each other, so partners are on guard at particular times of highest

18 jeopardy, ready for the most serious break-glass moments when viral

19 disinformation risks real world harm, and we have done that without in any

20 way muzzling our own journalism. We have been sharing alerts over COVID-19,

21 and before that, over falsities which posed a threat to democratic integrity

22 during the UK and Taiwan elections. Can we have the next slide, please? More

23 recently, we have been sharing alerts over the most serious disinformation in

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1   two very different elections – in the U.S. and in Myanmar – and again, with

2   an emphasis on the most serious disinformation, and because different news

3   organizations are most relevant in different regions, we are working with a

4   wide and expanding group of publishers. Speed is at the heart of the

5   response, because the most serious disinformation has the potential to go

6   viral very quickly, and to turn from words and images online to real harm in

7   the real world. When a false story from a fake BBC Breaking Twitter account –

8   [00:05:00]

9   can I have the next slide, please – claimed that the UK Prime Minister,

10 Boris Johnson, was dead in April, a false alert amongst the partners stopped

11 the lie spreading across the internet and around the world, where it could

12 have caused panic and moved markets. This is the thought of disinformation

13 that is really dangerous. When people in the UK, and later in Canada and the

14 Netherlands, were urged in Facebook and Instagram posts to burn 5G masts,

15 feeding on the conspiracy that linked COVID-19 to 5G, again, a fast alert

16 played a part in preventing destruction that could have compromised the

17 response of the emergency services and could have cost lives. Next slide,

18 please. This is very much a work in progress, we are working out how to work

19 together and what is effective, but we have pioneered what we believe is a

20 really important initiative, because working together achieves things we

21 couldn't do on our own. The Trusted News Initiative has evolved over the past

22 year to become the only place in the world where disinformation is discussed

23 in real time, as it happens, by some of the most trusted global news

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1   organizations and the biggest global tech platforms. It is a significant step

2   in the fight against disinformation, alongside other welcome developments in

3   the past year, such as the increasingly important role of fact-checkers

4   across the world and other alliances, but the threat is changing too. All of

5   us have to work out how best we can meet that threat. Thank you, and I'm very

6   happy to take any questions about our work. We've been asked about how we

7   check facts and how do we know whether information is reliable or not. We are

8   not about checking facts. The BBC has a Disinformation Unit that is about

9   checking facts, and we are deliberately at arm's length from our journalistic

10   colleagues within the BBC, because the Trusted News Initiative will never

11   muzzle our journalism. There are also, around the world, fact-checking

12   organizations. We rely on BBC journalism and the journalism of our partners

13   to know what is reliable, but once we know something isn't reliable, that's

14   the point at which we can alert each other. Thank you, Catherine, for that

15   question. We're asked, do you think there is a need to educate people on this

16   topic? How have you informed [INDISCERNIBLE 00:08:21]? Media education is

17   absolutely vital, and indeed, when you talk to both news organizations and

18   tech platforms, and lots of organizations that are interested in this sphere,

19   media education always comes up as an issue that needs to be explored

20   further. It's really important that individuals know what they can trust and

21   know what they can't trust, and have the critical faculties to do that. We at

22   the BBC have media education. Beyond Fake News is a World Service initiative,

23   a set of programs that is there to inform people. There is also, within the

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1   UK, initiatives like Young Reporter, and worldwide something called My World,

2   both for young people to build their critical thinking. We don't know as much

3   as we could know and we want to know about what is effective and what isn't

4   effective, which signals of fake news that something is potentially less

5   trustworthy are things that audiences feel that they react to or that they

6   find that makes something more interesting, so we're still learning, but

7   undoubtedly that's a really, really important part of the puzzle.

8   [00:10:00]

9   Are there any other questions that I can see? How can a media outlet

10   remain neutral and impartial? Once you identify something as fake news, what

11   have been the reactions of the readers, positive and negative, and how can it

12   define what is the truth? As I said in my talk, impartiality is right at the

13   heart of what the BBC stands for. There is nothing in the Trusted News

14   Initiative that in any way calls that into account, and we ensure, as I say,

15   that nothing in the Trusted News Initiative muzzles our journalism in any

16   way. This is about fighting falsehoods that are dangerous and are defined.

17   This is not about taking sides. We would never do that and have never done

18   that. Next question. Do you partner with academics for media education? We

19   have, as part of the Trusted News Initiative, to globally recognized

20   [INDISCERNIBLE 00:11:32] academics. We have Claire Wardle and the First Draft

21   organization, and they are a specialist in disinformation, particularly

22   around health disinformation. We also have, as part of the alliance, the

23   Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University, under the

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1 leadership of Rasmus Kleis Nielsen. So we have been working with academics,

2 and we are obviously always interested to know more about the way in which

3 disinformation is changing. Disinformation mutates. We've seen in the past

4 year that COVID-19 has changed the nature of disinformation. It also changes

5 as it goes across national boundaries, and exploits some of the concerns in

6 different territories in different ways, but again, we are just beginning to

7 learn what the threat is and therefore what the most appropriate way to

8 counter that is. What do you think about training people to analyze news?

9 It's really important. We have produced, as I say, pieces of content that

10 help people to understand what to look for in news that they can trust and

11 what to be suspicious of. If something is overly emotional, if it appears to

12 tell you things that are different from what you've heard elsewhere, you

13 know, there are various ways in which we try to help the audience understand

14 what they can do. We also, of course, would say that the BBC stands for a

15 gold standard in trusted journalism, which is why, when imposter content

16 purporting to be from the BBC or indeed from any other trusted news sources

17 are dangerous, because all our audiences give us a view of the values that

18 they hold us to account for, and clearly imposter content creates a situation

19 where our own brand is undermined as a result. I'm quite interested as a

20 scientist in this initiative. I'm very concerned about the false information

21 that can be created and spread, even more too, worried about why people

22 cannot decide what is real or not. How can I be in touch? I mean to keep

23 following up our project progress. Please, reach out to me, I would love you

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1   to get involved. I can tell you more. I think this is a really, really

2   important area. Just to reiterate, we will never in the BBC be in the

3   business of telling people what to think and what is right and forming

4   opinions. What we do want to do is say that there is objective truth, and

5   clearly there is objective truth and there is objective truth in science.

6   [00:15:00]

7   We also have, clearly, we have been working in the U.S. elections, and

8   that has posed many challenges, as you can imagine. Rather than give you a

9   running commentary at the moment, that's something that we will come back to

10 in due course to discuss. What we are seeing is a huge amount of

11 disinformation at the moment, and I'm sure that anybody who is aware of the

12 news will be aware of that at the moment. Are there any other questions? How

13 do you think the Paris Peace Forum and its participants could support your

14 initiative? We would love to hear from you, we would love you to spread the

15 word about what we're doing, and I think we would love to know how we can

16 build on this. I keep emphasizing, we all started off thinking something is

17 better than nothing, we must try something, but this is a work in progress.

18 This is a work in progress because it is only through the tessellation of

19 organizations that we can fight a challenge, and secondly, that we can work

20 out how it's changing and evolving. As I've said, there are various legs of

21 action here. One is the way in which fact-checkers and the fact-checking

22 environment has become so much more sophisticated over the last year;

23 secondly, the way in which these alliances are coming together in new ways;

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1 thirdly, there is a way in which we all have learned about how we can warn

2 all our audiences about what to look out for in terms of media education, so

3 keep up the dialogue and let's keep talking, because as I say, this is an

4 evolving threat and really matters. In your opinion, how climate change

5 coverage is being made in the mainstream media? I am not sure quite how that,

6 at the moment, we haven't tackled disinformation and climate change, and

7 perhaps that's something that we can consider in the future. At the moment,

8 that hasn't been in scope. How can information be used to tackle

9 disinformation in a transparent way? I think we all believe in transparency;

10 equally, we don't want to be gamed by bad actors, so we want to talk about

11 what we're doing and what we're learning, and we hope that in the spring next

12 year, we will be able to bring wider groups of stakeholders together to talk

13 about that. As I say, it's about working out what works without being gamed

14 by bad actors. Are there any further questions? I think that's it for the

15 moment. Thank you very, very much. I feel deeply privileged

16   [00:20:00]

17   to have had the chance to talk about what we're doing. We would love to

18 talk more with anybody who is interested, and thank you very much for

19 listening. Goodbye.

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I, Anders Nelson, hereby certify that the document "Technology, democracy and trust Creating a more democratic online world" is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, a true and accurate transcription from English to English.

Anders
Nelson

Digitally signed by
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Anders Nelson
Project Manager

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